



CHAIRMAN

Federal Communications Commission

Washington, D.C.

February 10, 2004

Mr. Robert Sachs
NCTA
1724 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Mr. Sachs:

The rise of the cable television industry has brought Americans a wealth of new and competitive programming options. The industry can be proud that it brings some of the best educational, children's, family-oriented and entertainment programming to millions of Americans each day. Your industry has also been a leader in providing subscribers with technological tools to better control what programming comes into their homes.

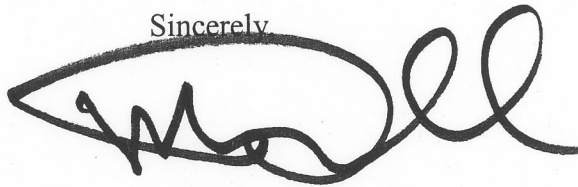
The rise of the cable industry and its ability to provide competitive programming alternatives to serve the diverse interests of our citizens has also given rise to more opportunities for the worst of programming to invade our living rooms. As a result, the Federal Communications Commission has heard growing discontent from an increasing number of our citizens about what they are seeing and hearing on television. Although much of the focus of that concern has been on broadcast programming, I believe the cable industry cannot completely ignore this discontent. A substantial majority of Americans subscribe to cable services and much of what they see comes through your medium. In particular, public concern has sharply centered on indecent, profane and excessively violent programming being too accessible to children.

The FCC will, of course, continue to protect children and respond to the public's concerns. Under our authority, and consistent with the First Amendment, we will continue to vigorously enforce our rules and standards and promote improvements in television. More far reaching change, however, also depends on the broadcast and cable industries committing themselves to protecting children and assisting viewers in making informed choices about what they and their families see. The recent and regrettable display during the Super Bowl halftime show shocked most Americans in large measure because it foisted on unsuspecting viewers images that many deem inappropriate for a program so heavily watched by families at a time when one would expect children to be in the audience.

To that end, I challenge the cable industry to consider ways in which it can help to positively improve the quality of choices available to viewers and more fully empower families to shield indecent and excessively violent programming from their children. Just one example would be to engage in a voluntary education and outreach campaign to assist parents and children in finding the best family-friendly programming that cable has to offer and to use the tools available to prevent those channels and programs that are inappropriate for children from reaching their eyes and ears. The industry played a valuable role, working with other groups, including the NAB and MPAA, in developing the voluntary TV Parental Guidelines. I urge you now to work across the industry and with the public again to make those efforts more effective and to more fully realize our mutual goals.

The cable industry's service to our citizens has been laudable over the years. Your members have brought new programming and services to meet the public's diverse political, informational and entertainment needs and interests. I share the public's concern about the rise of inappropriate and excessively violent programming, however, and we will continue to take actions to protect the well-being of our children. On this front, I believe the cable industry can and should better inform the public of the tools available to them to better control the programming that enters their homes. With that, please advise me within the next thirty days of any steps your members will take to meet this challenge to better serve the public. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Powell", with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Michael K. Powell